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FEB 24 2000

02/21/00

RE: Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Mitigation Feasibility Study

US Army Corps of Engineers  
Department of the Army  
Walla Walla District, Corps of Engineers  
Attention: Lower Snake River Study  
201 North Third Avenue  
Walla Walla, Washington 99362-1876

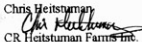
Dear US Army Corps of Engineers:

I would like to take this opportunity to provide written comment on the four alternatives selected for consideration in recovery of our wild fisheries stocks. While I do not believe that any measurable consideration of the public input will be actually considered I feel that as a resident of the Pacific Northwest I have an obligation to both my community and the resources at stake to make my views heard.

I must express my dissatisfaction at the manner in which the public meeting in Clarkston, Washington on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000 was conducted. I do not like to think that a government run entity would allow shenanigans like moving selected groups of individuals to the front of the line or security measures so lax that doors were opened to stack a meeting with selected groups. These are just a few examples of what was reported to me from individuals who attended the meeting. As a member of the Board of Supervisors for the Palouse Conservation District I know that responsible management of all of our natural resources is imperative to the viability of this region & to all people in all manners concerned. The credibility of organizations that voluntarily work for improved conservation measure is damaged when a paid government entity show either preferential treatment for one group or utter disregard for another.

That being said, I must state that while some studies show that Alternative 4 may help the chances of success for our Wild Fisheries, the fact remains that the proven results can not be confirmed. Breaching of the four dams on the Lower Snake River will not ensure survival of these natural resources and may well be the destruction of others as well. I understand the Army Corps responsibility to mitigate for the damage brought to the resource by the development of the dams. However, I think that the breaching of these dams is a poor attempt at a quick fix for a problem that is far larger then the government has been willing to address. Attacking the smallest component of the problem to show progress in solving the problem with a divide and conquer attitude has unfortunately become the method of choice by our government today. To consider the removal of these dams has only divided a region of the country where a great deal of progress in conservation measures had been with all of the people having been involved.

Measures to correct the overfishing of endangered species, methods of take of those species and protection from predatory species need to be addressed. Ocean conditions need to be better understood. If the last two years of declining populations of Salmon on the Kenia River in Alaska, a river without dams, is any indicator then we have a responsibility to find the cause. Instead of making the assumption that the dams on our rivers are the sole problem to these declining populations. The failure to ensure the production of all hatchery fish here in Washington to at least maintain the genetic stocks is again a step in the wrong direction. The addition of fish friendly structures to the dams is a far better alternative then breaching which will allow an incalculable amount of silt to freely flow down the river and bury existing fisheries. The selection of the breaching alternative is like putting a Band-Aid on cancerous tissue. It will only serve to hide the extent of the problem and ultimately prevent a cure.

Chris Heitsman  
  
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